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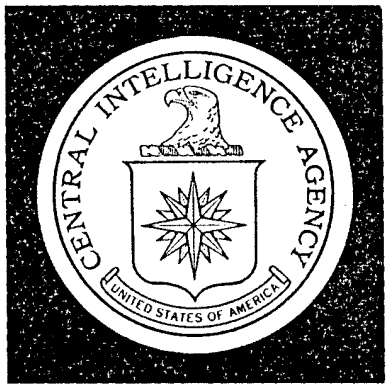

The Situation in Vietnam: Overview and Outlook

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM: OVERVIEW AND OUTLOOK

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SUMMARY

The present time is particularly appropriate for a review of the situation in Vietnam since we are at the close of a phase that began with the Tet offensive last January. With the change in American administrations, the opening of the substantive negotiations in Paris and the current reintensification of the fighting after an appreciable lull, a new phase is now beginning.

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Since Tet 1968, military trends have been increasingly favorable for allied forces. The Communists have taken staggering casualties, their combat effectiveness has declined, and their overall strength has been maintained only through huge inputs of North Vietnamese manpower. Hanoi recognizes its military shortcomings and has been seeking for several months to redress them. Many of the units withdrawn from combat last year are now returning after refitting and the level of infiltration has risen sharply since late November. The enemy has already begun to step up the level of his military action and we can expect more activity along the lines we have seen over the last few weeks. This may include at least terrorist and sapper attacks on major urban centers, including Saigon. Such attacks could come at anytime.

Politically, the Communists are engaged in a major effort to weaken the GVN and to create the appearance if not the substance, of an ongoing administrative apparatus "governing" as much of South Vietnam as possible. Their aim is to boost the prestige and image of the National Liberation Front and its claims of control over territory and people. These claims are wildly exaggerated. At the moment, the GVN's position is a strong one: the political surface in South Vietnam is reasonably calm, progress is being made toward the elusive goal of stability, and the pace and effectiveness of pacification has increased appreciably in the past few months. Events of the next few months, however, are certain to test South Vietnam's internal stability, the solidity of recent pacification gains, and particularly the GVN's ability to withstand the war of nerves the Communists patently intend to wage in Paris.

In the negotiations, the Communists have already proved to be tough and skillful bargainers. They obviously want to move into substantive issues, which they hope will prove explosive in Saigon and divisive in relations between the GVN and the United States. We believe, however, that they also view the Paris talks as a serious effort to explore the possibilities of a negotiated settlement.

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We cannot predict the terms the Communists would eventually accept as a compromise settlement. Hanoi's minimum position, however, probably will include total American troop withdrawal in a clearly defined period, and a restructuring of the political order in South Vietnam which guarantees the Communists a role and a power base from which they can work to achieve their ultimate objective of domination.

Over the next few months the Communists will attempt to combine political action and military efforts in a mix that will enable Hanoi to cope with whatever policies are adopted by the new US administration. At the moment the Communists believe the war can be continued at acceptable costs long enough to convince the United States that a compromise political settlement is mandatory.

Over the near term, the critical variable in all major aspects of the Vietnamese struggle--decisions in Hanoi, negotiations in Paris, and the course of events in South Vietnam--will be the posture and policies of the new American administration.

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I. THE CURRENT SETTING

1. The present time is a particularly appropriate one for a review of the situation in Vietnam in terms of the balance of military and political forces.* With the start of substantive negotiations in Paris, we have witnessed the close of a distinct phase in Vietnam that began with the Tet offensive last January. Looking back, it seems more evident that this was a critical watershed not only in the strictly military sense, but also in the broader political context. What the phase has demonstrated, at least to the North Vietnamese, was that a military victory was clearly beyond their capabilities and that the political dimensions of the struggle would have to assume greater significance in their overall strategy.

2. They had already made some preliminary moves in the summer of 1967, when the National Liberation Front revised its seven-year-old political program, altering it to emphasize national goals in an attempt to broaden its appeal to non-Communist elements. Then at the Tet offensive the first appearance was made by the so-called Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces, an urban based coalition of ostensibly non-Communists. Finally, in the wake of Tet, and the failure to stimulate an "uprising," the Communists began to develop administrative bodies called "Liberation Committees" at the local levels. Though largely a paper-shuffling affair, in which old cadre assumed new titles, the overall effort is to lay the groundwork for claiming de facto control over a wide area of the country and a high percentage of the population.

3. In Paris, the Communists have proved skillful and tough bargainers. They have been agonizingly persistent and patient. Several points emerge from

See Annex A for a background discussion of the political forces struggling for control in Vietnam.

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the record since last May. Hanoi has been careful to avoid an irrevocable stalemate. On both critical issues, the bombing halt and the seating hassle, the Communists have eventually climbed down from initial positions and have given ground on some key points. In each case, of course, Communist negotiators waited until the last moment to shift their positions, trying to extract every possible concession and timing their moves to take advantage of developments in American politics. Finally, there is the intriguing role of the Soviet Union as a go between at crucial junctures. The exact relationship between Hanoi and Moscow is uncertain, but it seems clear that Soviet influence is growing, apparently at the expense of the Chinese.

II. THE MILITARY PICTURE

4. In the military field, the trends since the low point at Tet have been generally favorable for the allies.* Communist forces of all types suffered unprecedented casualties during 1968 and the combat effectiveness of enemy units declined. Despite his mounting problems, the enemy has been able to keep his combat forces quantitatively about as strong as they were a year ago, mainly through the input of vast numbers of North Vietnamese troops. During the last half of 1968 the enemy deployed a number of units into sanctuary areas where training has undoubtedly improved and units have probably been restored to something approaching full strength.

5. By contrast, the overall strength and effectiveness of allied forces has sharply improved. Alterations in US tactics have increased the combat efficiency of US units, and Allied intelligence has been more successful in detecting Communist movements since Tet. More firepower and combat punch have been added to the ARVN and South Vietnamese paramilitary forces by upgrading armament, stepping up mobilization, and

The relative strengths and problems of ARVN and VC/NVA forces are discussed in more detail in Annex B.

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improving training. Nevertheless the ARVN forces are beset by a number of weaknesses and basic faults and remain highly dependent on US forces for air, artillery and logistics support. An ARVN capability to assume a significantly greater responsibility for the ground war against enemy forces at its current strength is unlikely to be attained within the next year or two.

6. The allies, especially the US forces, have become increasingly effective in maintaining steady pressure on many enemy units and in preventing enemy campaigns from materializing on a large scale. Not only have allied forces been generally able to block major new enemy offensives over the past few months, they have done so while retaining a substantial margin of force to support the extension of security and a GVN presence in the countryside.

7. Several developments point to a renewed Communist effort to launch a new phase of intensive combat. The Communists probably have completed the refurbishing and refitting of the main force units previously pulled back into sanctuary areas along the Cambodian and Laotian borders and in North Vietnam. Recent intelligence has provided an increasing number of indications that this stand-down is ending and that most of these units are moving or are preparing to move back into their normal operational areas.

8. Moreover, after a relative lull in enemy infiltration during the fall, the number of North Vietnamese troops being put into the pipeline took a sharp upturn in December which has continued in January 1969. We estimate that at least 40,000 and possibly 50,000 men are en route to South Vietnam at present. Most of these troops should arrive in South Vietnam during the first quarter of 1969, and they could be followed by additional large inputs.

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III. THE POLITICAL PICTURE

9. The Saigon government weathered the shock of the Tet offensive and, on balance, emerged strengthened from the tribulations of early 1968. All involved at topmost levels--Thieu, Ky, and Prime Minister Huong--apparently recognize the need for unity in the face of common danger, both on the battlefield and in in the Paris meetings. The personal rivalry between Thieu and Ky persists, however, as does the increasingly sharp rivalry between Ky and Huong. These rivalries naturally tend to undermine government cohesion. Although Thieu has maneuvered adroitly to strengthen his position against Ky and, on the whole, has become an increasingly effective president during the past year, he still finds it difficult to project the image of a political leader and has failed to develop an effective political organization to mobilize popular support for the GVN.

10. Although the dire prospects of Tet had a rallying effect, particularly on the urban population, as the immediate danger has receded, so too has the resultant sense of unity. There are grumblings in various quarters by such elements as the militant Buddhists who dislike those in power. At present, however, none of these groups seem likely to offer the government serious trouble. On balance, the political surface in Vietnam is reasonably calm and progress continues toward the elusive goal of stability.

11. Despite this surface calm, uncertainities about Communist military plans, the course of the Paris meetings and, above all, the policies of the new American administration have produced a widespread mood of apprehension. Acutely conscious of their need for American assistance in coping with the Communist drive for political power, the Saigon government's leaders--and, for that matter, most politicized segments of South Vietnamese society--have long been hypersensitive in their concern for American constancy and what they think of as the US willingness to stay the course.

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12. Over the past year, this general concern has incorporated the mounting specific fear that American domestic political considerations may lead or impel the US government to give Vietnamese interests short shrift in a quest for settlement and peace at almost any price. In this most sensitive area, even when the GVN leadership is operating with the advantage of sophistication transcending that of its citizenry or with knowledge and reassurances privately conveyed through ambassadorial channels, Saigon's leaders still cannot afford to move too far out in front of Vietnamese opinion on the emotionally charged political issues here involved. Also, on these central issues, even when Saigon's leaders want to be cooperative, they feel an acute political need to save their own and their government's "face" by not appearing to cave in under American pressure.

13. President Thieu and his senior colleagues (including Vice President Ky) do not necessarily fear peace; but rationally or not, they are genuinely afraid of being sold out. Their behavior in recent weeks has reflected this fear and their behavior in the weeks ahead will continue to do so. Thieu and Ky's expressed awareness of the need for negotiations, and their professed endorsement of the desirability of an early honorable settlement are almost certainly sincere, but their private stress is much more an "honorable" than "early." The GVN's leaders recognize the political reality of the widespread desire for peace within the United States. The GVN's recent initiative on a US troop withdrawal announcement was a reflection of that recognition. But Thieu and his colleagues are also worried about the Communists' ability to exploit this desire to the detriment of the non-Communist Vietnamese. One specific GVN concern, for example, is that the American desire for peace may lead the US government to an overly optimistic assessment of the NLF's potential independence from Hanoi and hence to pressure on the GVN for concessions that--in GVN eyes--would be politically disastrous in South Vietnam.

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IV. PACIFICATION

14. These uncertainties and apprehensions have contributed greatly to a more positive attitude on the GVN's part toward the broad effort to secure the countryside against the Viet Cong military forces and political organization and to engage the allegiance of the rural population. Thieu recognizes that pacification is a critical element in preparing his government for the inevitable struggle with the Viet Cong when and if the fighting ends. Concern over how much time is left has stimulated GVN support for a much more vigorous and sustained pacification effort.

15. In assessing the status of this effort, two sets of facts need to be constantly borne in mind: First, approximately 80-90 percent of South Vietnam's population is concentrated in about 25 percent of the country's total land area: the coastal lowlands, the cities and the Mekong Delta. What counts politically, therefore, is control of people, not territory. Secondly, the shadings of control found in Vietnam are not tidy or neatly demarcatable. Save in a few extreme cases, there are no clear zones of GVN or of Communist control. Overall, the most recent figures from Saigon indicate that as of the end of December 1968, 76.3 percent of South Vietnam's population lived in controlled urban areas or rural hamlets classed as at least "relatively secure", 11.4 percent of the population lived in contested hamlets, and 12.3 percent of the population was controlled outright by the VC.

16. This rather bright picture requires a number of cautionary caveats. Though we "measure" pacification progress and "population control" via a data matrix--the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES)--this matrix was designed primarily as a program management tool and not as an index of progress or measure of "control." HES provides a better

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gauge than anything else extant, but its data needs to be read in light of the fact that when employed to measure "control," the system is being used for purposes it was not designed to fulfill. Furthermore, smooth national HES data curves generally mask considerable provincial and even greater district level movement--i.e. dramatic progress in some areas cancelling out, in national averages, almost equally dramatic regression in others. In addition, the national percentages cited above reflect the eminently defensible but nonetheless debatable judgement which classes "C" hamlets as "GVN controlled" rather than "contested." The detailed statistical breakout for the last quarter of 1968 is not yet available in Washington, but in September, C hamlets accounted for 27.8 percent of South Vietnam's total population.

17. In addition to the "positive" task of providing the rural population with security and tangible benefits sufficient to induce it to identify its fortunes with those of the GVN, the pacification program also involves the "negative" task of identifying and eradicating the Communist politico-military control apparatus known as the Viet Cong Infrastructure (or VCI).

18. The allied attack on the Viet Cong Infrastructure was never properly integrated or systematically organized until the advent of the Phoenix program early in 1967 and, really, not until President Thieu--on 1 July--signed the decree that made Phoenix/Phung Hoang a truly joint effort fully backed by the Vietnamese. In the past few months, this effort has picked up momentum and it is already causing the Communists considerable concern. Despite genuine signs of early promise, however, broad judgements on the probable net impact of Phoenix can not now be made and will have to await the record of Phoenix's performance over the next few months.

19. In our view, the pacification effort as a whole has made a significant contribution to the prosecution of the war and strengthened the GVN's

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overall political position and prospects. The record of the past few months has been particularly encouraging. At a minimum, the setbacks which occurred in the wake of last year's Tet attacks seem to have been largely overcome.

20. Progress over the past four months, however, reflects not only the results of the current intense GVN and allied effort known as the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC), but also the general standdown in Communist initiated military activity and the pullback of main force units which have provided an optimum climate for pacification efforts. It would be extremely disquieting if significant progress had not been recorded in recent months. The acid test--both of allied abilities to record continued progress and the solidity of gains recently registered--will come when the Communists resume some significant measure of military activity and exert military pressure deliberately designed to counter the pacification campaign. This test will almost certainly come within the next few weeks and may, in fact, have already begun.

V. THE VIEW FROM HANOI

21. It is against this general background that the Communists have had to formulate their strategy for the coming year and to face the new US administration. We are fairly certain that there has been considerable debate in Hanoi over a correct strategic line and its proper tactical implementation. The essence of the discussion seems to be whether Hanoi should adopt an "offensive strategy" looking once again for dramatic military results, or adopt a more flexible combination of political and military tactics.

22. What evidence there is points to the latter course as the one the Communists are now pursuing. There are several factors which may have influenced Hanoi in this direction. First of all, and probably the most important is a conviction that Hanoi cannot win the war through large-scale, offensive military

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actions. Hanoi knows that continuing such a strategy would involve high losses without commensurate gains. The North Vietnamese further believe that the effort necessary to support large-scale fighting results in a serious weakening of the ideological struggle in both North and South Vietnam. Closely allied to these propositions, is the probable conviction that the US will to persevere in South Vietnam is weakening and can eventually be undermined through a combination of the threat of indefinite military struggle coupled with pressures and gestures toward compromise and political settlement. In sum, the prevailing view in Hanoi seems to be that the first priority should be directed at getting the US out of Vietnam and, further, that united front tactics, negotiations, and other political means should be used to this end, with military pressures and terrorism playing an ancillary and supporting role.

23. Hanoi's problem is to decide on the best mix of political and military tactics in order to encourage what it regards as favorable trends in US thinking about the war and to get the new US administration committed to the route of a negotiated settlement. Hanoi almost certainly calculates that a large measure of military pressure will continue to be needed, if only to make sure that allied progress--whether in conventional battles or pacification--never reaches a point of significant breakthrough. In other words, Hanoi must demonstrate to the US that the Communists can make the war continue with no clear end in sight.

24. Hanoi realizes that it is in no position to impose its own terms for a settlement. Its standard positions, as stated in the DRV's four points and more recently in the new five points of the Liberation Front, clearly are for bargaining.*

Annex C contains the full texts of these basic Communist statements.

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In private and through various third parties Hanoi has already intimated a willingness to discuss lesser demands.

25. The Communists probably have set out several possible scenarios for the negotiations. They certainly hope that in the process of fighting and negotiating the Saigon government will crumble and be replaced by a group of leaders more amenable to the kind of agreements the Communists desire. This is why they are putting such emphasis at the moment on the need for a "peace cabinet" in Saigon or at least the removal of Thieu, Ky and Huong.

26. If neither events nor negotiations produce such results, we cannot be certain how far the Communists will go in scaling down their demands. Hanoi views the Paris talks as a serious venture, however. Its terms will have to be explored by our negotiators, of course, and they will only emerge clearly in the process of hard bargaining. At the core of the Communist position are two minimum essentials: first, that all American troops must be withdrawn within a clearly defined period; and second, that the US agree to a formula which gives the Communists some guaranteed political status and a power base sufficient to provide them with a clear shot at obtaining control in the South and eventual reunification of the country. This is the "political beachhead" President Thieu believes the Communists hope to retain at the conclusion of the talks. Remembering the period after 1954, the Communists almost certainly would refuse to accept a settlement which fails to satisfy these minimum aims.

27. Once substantive discussions actually begin, Communist negotiators probably will lead off with a broad sketch of their standard positions as outlined in the DRV's four points and the Front's five points. Within this propaganda framework, however, we believe the Communists are prepared to be fairly flexible in their tactics. The precise degree and nature of that flexibility will be largely

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determined by how Hanoi sizes up the policies and attitude of the Nixon administration and by Hanoi's assessment of the situation on the ground in South Vietnam.

VI. COMMUNIST INTENTIONS: THE NEAR TERM

28. Military. In the military field, the Communists have to decide whether their objectives are better served by 1) maintaining a relatively low, but steady, pace of fighting in South Vietnam in the hope that this may encourage the new US administration to move ahead toward a negotiated settlement; or (2) by sharply increasing the pace of military action to project an image of Communist strength and thus convince American leaders that delay in reaching a settlement will not result in a better deal for the allied side. Most of our evidence suggests the Communists are trying--by increased infiltration, new troop deployments, and stepped up harassing attacks--to be in a position to make the latter option genuinely viable.

29. One of the main considerations impelling Hanoi toward a course of intensified military activity is the current allied Accelerated Pacification Campaign. Hanoi cannot permit the allies to proceed relatively uncontested with a program which not only solidifies and extends Saigon's political writ but which also poses a basic threat to the Communist organization in the South. Moreover, the military situation in South Vietnam in the past several months has given the appearance of relative Communist passivity in the face of allied initiative. In Hanoi's view, this is the wrong kind of background music for conducting substantive discussions in Paris.

30. In addition, Hanoi would certainly like to create within the American people and their new leaders a psychological mood duplicating as much as possible that produced by the 1968 Tet attacks. Major attacks, however, would involve considerable

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risks. Failure would be a major setback and the Communists must realize that prospects for success are doubtful at best. Moreover, they must be quite uncertain about the reaction of the new US administration even to an attempted major offensive--especially one which included attacks on Saigon itself.

31. Nevertheless, Hanoi will try to demonstrate that it has the capabilities and the will, despite allied pressures, to continue the military struggle, and thus convince Washington that the road of negotiations is attractive and feasible. We believe the current high level of infiltration activity is aimed at putting teeth in this argument and to put the Communists in a position to apply greater military pressure. We do not think the Communists will move forward with anything approaching an all-out effort, however, until they have sized up the policies of the new US administration. In the meantime, we can expect some rise in the overall level and scope of Communist military activity along the lines which have been developing in the past week or two. This may include at least sapper and terrorist attacks on urban centers, including Saigon. There is evidence that such attacks could be tried at any time.

32. Political. Current Communist political and propaganda activities are concentrated on exacerbating relations between South Vietnam and the United States, denigrating and embarrassing the Saigon government and its leaders, encouraging factionalism and rivalry among non-Communist Vietnamese, and improving the status of the NLF as a body rightfully entitled to a share of political power in South Vietnam. The theme Hanoi most wants to see developed is that all parties to the war want peace except the current Saigon government, which is the primary obstacle to an early settlement of the Vietnam conflict. In Paris and elsewhere, Hanoi has already developed a major propaganda campaign that the peace so universally desired cannot come until Thieu, Ky and Premier Huong are

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removed from their leadership positions in Saigon. In support of this campaign, the Communists are stepping up their political action efforts in South Vietnam--terrorism, attempts to foment demonstrations, and other efforts to create unrest and to weaken the GVN's administrative authority.

33. As they strive to undermine the GVN, the Communists also are working on improving their political prospects in South Vietnam. Their main energies are directed toward enhancing the status of the Liberation Front and securing a future political role for it in South Vietnam. At the same time, the Communists are preparing for the eventuality of a ceasefire and a shift toward greater stress on political competition. The "Liberation Committees," which they have been setting up in rural areas during the past year, will be a prime mechanism for this effort and will probably be used in Paris to support Front claims of territorial control. The numbers of these committees and the extent to which they actually exercise governing functions are wildly exaggerated by the Communists, but such claims are one of the best indications of the bargaining line the Front is likely to take eventually in Paris.

VII. OUTLOOK

34. In sum, a new phase seems to be developing in Vietnam with the opening of the substantive negotiations in Paris, the change in American administrations, and the current intensification of the fighting. The Communists seem prepared to employ a flexible combination of diplomatic, political, and military tactics, which they still hope will achieve their ends. But the critical variable--at least over the near term--will be the posture and policies of the new American administration and their impact in Paris, Saigon, and Hanoi.

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ANNEX A

THE VIETNAMESE PROTAGONISTS

1. The Nature of the Struggle. The struggle in Vietnam is in essence a struggle for political domination over those Vietnamese who now live in that portion of Vietnam lying south of the 17th parallel. The primary issue is control over people, not territory. Armed force--ranging from the depradadations of individual terrorists to coordinated campaigns by line military units of multi-regimental size--has long played a key role in the prosecution of this struggle; but our adversaries have seldom employed armed force, of any kind, for the classical military purpose of seizing and holding demarcatable plots of terrain. Instead, our adversaries have generally employed armed force, of all kinds, primarily as a political abrasive intended to cow the population into submission, collapse all political structures (from the local to the national level) they do not control, and erode the appetite for struggle of all who oppose our adversaries' drive for political control. For the Vietnamese involved in this struggle, therefore, the ultimate measure of success or failure will not be relative casualties inflicted, battles won or lost or even territory enterable with impunity but--instead--whose political writ runs (for whatever reason) over the population of South Vietnam.

2. Discussion and analysis of the struggle in Vietnam, and the major issues involved, frequently employ nouns or adjectives with definite geographic connotations (e.g. "North Vietnam," "South Vietnam," "northern aggression," "southern self-determination"). Though descriptively accurate in some contexts, in others, these geographically oriented labels are misleading or give rise to serious distortion. Such language implicitly suggests a conventional struggle between two traditional nation states whose populations are ethnically similar (e.g. the US

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and Canada), each of which acknowledges the other's existence even though both may dispute the location of their common frontier.

3. Such an implicit image bears almost no valid relationship to the realities of the struggle in Vietnam, primarily because none of the major Vietnamese participants therein thinks of the struggle or the issues involved in these terms--whatever these participants, on both sides, may say for public or international consumption. What you really have is not a contest between two nation states but a struggle for political control being waged in the southern part of Vietnam between, on the one hand, the Vietnamese Communist Party and its adherents, clients and supporters--some witting some not--and, on the other hand, a much more diffuse group whose only real thread of unity is its opposition to Communist rule.

4. The Vietnamese Communists: It would be a gross, and erroneous, over simplification to suggest that all those fighting or working for the "Viet Cong" are Communist party members doctrinally motivated by devotion to Marxism-Leninism. Many who fight and work for the VC cause have never heard of Marx or Lenin and are motivated by concerns that have little or nothing to do with Communist doctrine. Nonetheless, the control and direction of all aspects of the insurgency, which began in 1957 and has evolved into the full scale war being waged today, has always been kept firmly and effectively in the hands of the Vietnamese Communist Party, which, since 1951, has called itself the Dang Lao Dong (Vietnam Workers Party) and since 1962, referred to itself south of the seventeenth parallel as the Peoples Revolutionary Party. The control center for all VC activity in South Vietnam--the Central Office For South Vietnam (COSVN)--is a Party command echelon subordinate, through Party channels, to the Politburo in Hanoi.

5. For over two decades, the Vietnamese Communist party has shown a penchant for and skill in

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using Front organizations, always under tight covert Party control but ostensibly independent groupings incorporating both Communist and non-Communist elements. Whenever the Party hand in one group became too obvious or well known, it was followed by a successor, e.g. the Viet Minh was followed by the Lien Viet (during the struggle against the French) which was subsequently replaced, in North Vietnam, by the Fatherland Front. Using the same style and format, in 1960 the Party created the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) which has always been kept under tight Party control and whose pretentions to independence have always been taken much more seriously by foreigners than by the Vietnamese, who quickly recognized the NLF's lineal antecedents. After Tet 1968, the Party created the "Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces" as a possible urban oriented complement to the NLF. In a similar vein, the Party is now setting up "liberation committees", which are the lineal descendants of the "Administrative/Resistance Committees" through which, in the First Indochina War, the Party attempted to exercise political control over territory wrested from the French. Though as many non-Communist as possible are recruited into these various groups, their control is always tightly (and ruthlessly) kept exclusively in Party hands.

6. The Party thinks of itself--and is--as a single, nationwide organization. (For that matter, the state structure the Party overtly controls--the Democratic Republic of Vietnam--also thinks in similar terms and adamantly denies that its writ lawfully stops at the 17th parallel.) The Party's leadership thinks in national, not regional, terms. Furthermore, many key members of the Party leadership's upper echelons are persons of southern origin and/or persons whose party careers and rise to power within the Party are rooted in the southern struggle and the development of the Party's southern organization. Politburo member Pham Van Dong, Premier of the DRV, was born south of the 17th parallel (in Quang Ngai Province). Even more significantly, so too was

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the present head of the Party apparatus, Politburo member Le Duan. It was Le Duan who first organized COSVN (in 1952) and who remained its director until, probably, 1957, when he went to Hanoi to assume the function and, eventually, his present title of Party First Secretary. During the Franco - Viet Minh War, Le Duan's deputy in COSVN, who helped him build the southern Party organization, was Le Duc Tho, now a Politburo member, head of the Party's Organization Bureau and its chief negotiator in Paris. The present head of COSVN is another Politburo member, Pham Hung, a native of Vinh Long Province in the Mekong Delta. The "north/south" language Hanoi's leaders sometimes use in propaganda or diplomacy, in short, masks the central fact that the Hanoi leadership really does not think in such language. To the Party leadership, in language it also frequently employs, "Vietnam is one."

7. The way the Communist leadership views the overall struggle has several important ramifications. It explains why Hanoi believes it has the right to support the struggle in South Vietnam with North Vietnamese troops, who are, by definitition, not foreign. Hence, when Hanoi calls for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from South Vietnam, Hanoi is talking only about US and allied troops, not its own forces. Secondly, the Communist leadership's outlook and command structure, means that any discussions of present reality or potential future developments framed in terms of relationships between "North Vietnam" or "Hanoi" (as a government) and the National Liberation Front are apt to be misleading or meaningless.* All of our available evidence indicates that the Front's capacity for action independent of Party control is negligible and likely to remain so. The real point is the central (Politburo) Party leadership's capacity for maintaining control over and discipline within

*The Saigon leadership's acute appreciation of this point accounts in part for its strong emotional resistance to any negotiation arrrangements which treat "Hanoi" and the NLF as two separate entities.

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its southern organization. Here there are some signs of friction, but not at higher command levels. COSVN (which controls the NLF) will almost certainly remain the disciplined servant of the Hanoi Politburo and the six regional Party committees in South Vietnam will almost certainly remain the disciplined servants of COSVN. Any problems that arise are more likely to develop at provincial, district and village level. Finally, this leadership outlook means that whatever interim political arrangements the Hanoi Politburo may accept during the coming months (as the Politburo accepted the "temporary" division of Vietnam in 1954), the Politburo is unlikely ever to abandon its goal of establishing centralized Party political domination over South Vietnam.

8. The Non-Communist Vietnamese Protagonists: Whereas on one side of the political struggle now being waged in Vietnam you have a set of protagonists clustered around and effectively controlled by an articulated and definable organizational structure--the Vietnamese Communist Party--on the other side the picture is considerably more diffuse. Here too, geographically oriented labels (e.g., "the South Vietnamese", or "the South Vietnamese Government") can often be misleading since a high proportion of the key positions in the Government of Vietnam's military establishment, civil service and top leadership (e.g. Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky) are held by northern refugees. In discussing the political goals or preferences of those Vietnamese now living south of the seventeenth parallel, it is also important to recognize that the "politicized" portion of Vietnamese society--i.e., those who think in concepts we in the West construe as political--tend to be concentrated in urban areas. The goals and attitudes of the rural population, by and large, tend to be much more localized, pragmatic and immediate.

9. Given these caveats, the non-Communist protagonists in the struggle may be said to comprise all Vietnamese in South Vietnam opposed to Communist rule (and in Vietnamese eyes, short shrift is usually given to subtle distinctions

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between the Communist Party per se and its various front groups such as the NLF or the Alliance). Collectively, these protagonists span a spectrum ranging from almost the extreme left over to the extreme right, and encompass people of all regional, religious and other groups politically important in Vietnam. In the aggregate, this spectrum of those opposed to Communist rule comprises the overwhelming majority of politicized Vietnamese living in South Vietnam. Were this not the case, the war would have inevitably ended in a Communist victory years ago. A root problem, however, lies in the fact that though a majority of the politicized population of South Vietnam may be united in not wanting to come under Communist political domination, it is not yet united on anything else. Opposition to Communist rule does not necessarily, or even generally, equate to positive support for the Government of Vietnam or its leaders who are directing the main effort to prevent a Communist takeover.

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ANNEX B

MILITARY FORCES

I. Enemy Strength and Capabilities

Manpower Resources

1. The North Vietnamese are estimated to have had about 500,000 men in the Regular Armed Forces at the end of 1968. In addition to those located in South Vietnam and the border areas, about 35,000 combat and combat support troops are deployed in Laos. North Vietnam infiltrated about 100,000 men into South Vietnam each year during 1966 and 1967. Infiltration during 1968 was at least 250,000 and may possibily have been as high as 300,000.

2. The number of males fit for military service reaching draft age each year in North Vietnam is currently about 120,000. Although large numbers of infiltrators have been outside this age group, from the point of view of a manpower balance, only in 1968 did the requirement for troops exceed the new age group. We estimate that North Vietnam also has a civilian manpower pool of at least 600,000 physically fit males in the 18-30 age group out of the 10.5 million people in the 15-64 age group.

3. During the first half of 1968, training apparently was a more serious problem for Hanoi than the mobilization of manpower. Some draftees did not receive a full cycle of basic or infiltration training, and reservists who make up the majority of many infiltration groups did not receive additional training after being called up. The intensified scale of warfare during the first three quarters of 1968 added to the problems met during two years of building up the force structure also put a severe strain on the supply of NCOs and officers, particularly able ones with combat experience. These quality problems undoubtedly caused reduction in the effectiveness and regenerative

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capacity of some units. The deployment of a number of units into sanctuaries during the last quarter provided opportunities for refitting and training. The units involved have probably been restored to something approaching full strength though qualitative deterioration may have proved more difficult to rectify.

4. Despite these problems and the personnel losses suffered during 1968, the enemy Regular Forces in South Vietnam and in contiguous border areas of North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia are quantitatively about as strong as they were a year ago. The maintaining of Regular Force strength has been accomplished mainly by Hanoi providing an increasingly large share of replacements. The enemy has also been able to maintain the strength of his Guerrilla Forces but only at the cost of a significant diminution in their quality. The military threat represented by the Guerrilla Forces is limited by the fact that only one-third of them are estimated to be fully armed and adequately trained. Despite some erosion during 1968, the Viet Cong have been able to maintain a viable political infrastructure. These people are highly organized, well trained, and dedicated cadre that constitute the major target of Allied programs for the political resolution of the war.

5. We believe that the enemy should be able to maintain his forces at their current strength. His success in doing this, however, will depend on Hanoi's continued willingness to make large inputs of its own manpower and on Viet Cong ability to recruit in the South.

6. Beginning in August 1968 there was a sharp reduction in the number of infiltrators observed entering the infiltration system in North Vietnam. In December, however, infiltration activity picked up sharply, and it is now believed that at least 40,000 and possibly 50,000 men are en route to South Vietnam.

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7. Most of these troops should arrive during the first quarter of 1969. Their deployment at this time is consistent with the expected increase in enemy military pressure during the current winter season.

8. The current and future ability of the Viet Cong to recruit in South Vietnam is difficult to judge. There is increasing competition from the South Vietnamese draft but the most important factor will be the extent of Viet Cong military and political success during the coming months. It is believed that recruitment averaged about 8,500 a month during 1966 and about 7,500 a month during 1967. At these rates the Viet Cong were able to increase somewhat the number of men in regular units. Through a combination of recruitment and impressment the Viet Cong were able to at least double the average 1967 rate during the last two months of 1967 and the first quarter of 1968. Desertion among enemy forces later cut substantially into the gains of early 1968. For sometime recruiting clearly has been a serious problem to the Viet Cong, and the current monthly recruitment rate almost certainly is well below the average maintained in 1967.

9. The proportion of ethnic southerners in the enemy forces declined sharply during the last half of 1968. Above two-thirds of the personnel in the Viet Cong Main Forces are now believed to be infiltrated ethnic North Vietnamese, and during 1968 for the first time some North Vietnamese fillers have been allocated to some Viet Cong Local Force Units.*

Logistical Support

10. There is no evidence that supply problems have been a significant inhibiting factor in Hanoi's war planning. Logistical support to the Communist

The Viet Cong Local Forces are subordinate to Province and District Party Committees and normally operate in their home areas. The Main Forces are subordinate to higher military headquarters.

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Forces operating in South Vietnam during the next six months should be adequate to maintain the present or even an expanded force structure at present or higher levels of combat. The logistical system through Laos has been continuously improved throughout the war and the burden in North Vietnam is substantially lessened as a result of the cessation of the bombing. Materiel movement continues at a high rate throughout the system. In addition, enemy forces have been able to procure a substantial share of their non-lethal stores and an unknown share of arms and ammunition directly from Cambodian sources. The most serious logistical problem now being faced by the enemy is the increasing success of Allied spoiling operations in disrupting re-supply operations within South Vietnam and in uncovering large quantities of supplies in forward positions and thus disrupting planned enemy operations.

II. The Outlook for ARVN

11. ARVN's long-term potential for assuming a greater share of the combat burden has been greatly enhanced during the past year. The size of the regular and territorial forces increased about 30 percent during 1968. The firepower of most units is rapidly being increased as much of their World War II-type weaponry is replaced by modern US equipment. Moreover, most ARVN units gained extensive combat experience during 1968 as the level of combat intensified. Nevertheless, there are a number of constraints and basic faults in the ARVN military structure. An ARVN capability to assume a major share of the ground war against enemy forces at their current strengths is unlikely to be attained within the next year or two.

12. A major limitation to ARVN's future prospects for attaining an effective military capability is a serious lack of adequate air, artillery, and logistics support. For example, the ARVN is

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almost completely dependent on US airlift capabilities for deploying and supplying their combat forces during military operations. In addition to these basic deficiencies, the ARVN potential is limited by a large number of fundamental weaknesses. These include training, leadership, pay, and motivation. The latter is reflected in part by the serious desertion rate among ARVN's major combat units.

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ANNEX C

HANOI'S FOUR POINTS AND THE FRONT'S FIVE POINTS

I. The DRV's Four Points

The four points were made at the end of a long policy address by North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong in April 1965. Hanoi has described them ever since then as the "basis" for a political settlement in Vietnam. They read as follows:

1. Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people--peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. According to the Geneva agreements, the US Government must withdraw from South Vietnam US troops, military personnel, and weapons of all kinds, dismantle all U.S. military bases there, and cancel its military alliance with South Vietnam. It must end its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. According to the Geneva agreements, the US Government must stop its acts of war against North Vietnam and completely cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the DRV.

2. Pending the peaceful reunfication of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two zones the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected. The two zones must refrain from entering into any military alliance with foreign countries and there must be no foreign military bases, troops, or military personnel in their respective territory.

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3. The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the program of the NFLSV without any foreign interference.

4. The peaceful reunfication of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

II. The Five Points of the National Liberation Front

The Front set out a vague five-point statement in March 1965 which was less a program than an analysis of the situation and exhortation to the South Vietnamese people. The Communists touted the five points widely as the definitive Liberation Front position for a settlement, but they never really carried much weight. On 3 November 1968 in a statement reacting to the full US bombing halt, the Front included a revised five-point program which is now considered the basic Front negotiating position. The new five points read as follows:

1. South Vietnam is resolved to struggle for the materialization of its sacred rights; namely independence, democracy, peace, neutrality, prosperity, and ultimate peaceful reunification of the fatherland.

2. The US imperialists must put an end to their war of aggression against Vietnam, withdraw all their troops of their satellites and all war means from South Vietnam, and liquidate all US military bases in South Vietnam.

3. The internal affairs of the South Vietnamese people must be settled by South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the political program of the NFLSV, without foreign interference. The NFLSV advocates the formation of a broad national and democratic coalition government and holding of free general elections in South Vietnam.

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4. The reunification of Vietnam will be decided by the people in the two zones of Vietnam, step by step, by peaceful means and on the basis of consultations and agreements between the two zones, without foreign interference.

5. South Vietnam will pursue a foreign policy of peace and neutrality: No military alliance in any form with foreign countries, and establishment of friendly relations with all countries on the five principles of peaceful coexistence. Good neighborly relations will be set up with the Kingdom of Cambodia on the basis of respect for its independence, sovereignty, neutrality, and territorial integrity within its present borders, and with Laos on the basis of respect for the 1962 Geneva agreements concerning that country.

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